

**Appropriations Committee
Health Subcommittee
February 24, 2022**

**Public Hearing on:
House Bill 5037 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 2023
(Department of Developmental Services)**

Good afternoon/evening, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France, and members of the Appropriations Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on the state budget. I am Linda Iovanna and I am the CEO of CCARC, Inc in New Britain. We are a private provider of services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We employ 270 people throughout central CT and provide residential, day, employment, and vocational services for over 200 people.

Across the state, private providers are facing similar fates with families waiting for services, uncontrollable turnover, staffing crisis, closing or restricting programs, and creating wait lists for people who need 1:1 services.

I am aware of the significant efforts made by legislators last year that resulted in a 4% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for community nonprofits; thank you! That 4% was a lifeline and it was the start of an effort to fix our nonprofit system. It is essential that the long-term commitment be honored and that an additional 8% as a rate increase be allocated to nonprofits this budget session.

Though Covid numbers are subsiding, our programs have not recovered. New issues have emerged or have been compounded like our inability to attract and retain staff owing to the comparatively low wages for demanding highly regulated work. Our efforts to get people served back to work, to their volunteer sites and active in the community require dedicated reliable staff! It also requires things like dependable transportation and functional operating systems to support the entity. Funding needs to be allocated to nonprofits in a way that allows the nonprofit to address all crisis issues and, to lessen the management compression issue as well. I had one of our managers in my office last fall who very politely requested that I allow her to carry over her vacation time. As I questioned her about why she was not able to take any time, tears began to stream down her cheeks. She had been consistently working more than 80 hours a week as an exempt manager making less than 40K because of staffing shortages. She told me about her 3-year-old at home that she had not been able to spend much time with. I was at a loss for how to better help her. It is heart-wrenching. People should not have to choose between a job they love, that brings them a sense of satisfaction and knowledge that they are making a positive difference in the world and, being able to make a competitive wage.

We also need to maintain our systems and property. The nonprofit grant is crucial for many nonprofits to be able to complete upgrades and capital improvements. We need upgrades in technology – financial systems, cell phone plans, and training systems. We have not had rate increases to aid in these new expenses. We have numerous examples of capital improvements that need completion, operational increases in expenses – and this does not even touch on inflation rates. I understand that there are many competing budgetary needs. When you negotiate and vote on the budget, please put people first and fund an 8% increase to nonprofits.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted
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